Kat Stark:	<u>00:05</u>	[Opening Credits Music] Welcome to On The Wet Coast, a podcast about sexuality and ethical, non-monogamy of every variety. We talked polyamory and swinging, monogamish and open relationships. From dirty, dirty sex to heartbreak. We share our personal experiences and philosophies, observations and theories, what works for us and where we fucked it right up. Join us on the Wet Coast
Kat Stark:	<u>00:31</u>	[Topic intro music] If you think I'm flirting with you. I'm just being friendly. If you think I'm weird and I make you uncomfortable, then I'm probably flirting with you at ideal. @IdealPiper sums up my flirting style pretty well. Figuring out how to express our interest in someone can be one of the most challenging things in dating, especially if we find them really attractive, fun or interesting. What do we say? What if they're not into it? Why is it so hard to express ourselves in a fun, clear, non creepy way if what everyone we know reports about themselves is true. No one is good at flirting. How the hell are any of us hooking up if this is a skill no one has. I'm Kat Stark and thankfully on this episode of On The West Coast Flick Morrison and I are joined by Marcia Baczynski, master of the art of asking for what you want and dedicated flirt who is here to share her humour, wisdom, and creativity, and how to navigate the world of flirting. Welcome Marcia.
Flick Morrison:	01:24	Hey Marcia.
Marcia B:	01:24	Hi there.
Flick Morrison:	<u>01:25</u>	Thanks for joining us.
Marcia B:	<u>01:27</u>	I'm so glad to be here. Thanks.
Flick Morrison:	<u>01:31</u>	Thanks for being here and helping us with with our, our, our own flirting challenges. You have to sit there while we talk about you for another minute or so.
Marcia B:	01:38	Okay.
Flick Morrison:	<u>01:39</u>	Alright. So Marcia B is a renowned speaker, writer and coach on sexual communication, relationships and women's empowerment. Her primary mission is to help women and the people who love them to overcome shame and get in touch with what they truly want remarkingly, sowially, and

with what they truly want romantically, sexually, and

relationally, even if it's off the beaten path. Marcia is the cocreator of cuddle party and the founder of the good girl recovery program. Since 2003, she has worked with tens of

thousands of people through her private coaching workshops and group programs and made appearances in hundreds of magazines, news stories, radio interviews and podcasts. Wow.

Marcia B: 02:19 I get around. Yeah. Thank you.

Flick Morrison:

O2:24

Well, thank you so much for sharing, uh, your expertise with us.
So, um, so what, um, where did you develop your flirting
expertise was it just proficiency that you honed on your own or
did you, is this something you actually researched and trained

in?

Marcia B: Uh, neither say I researched. I guess I kind of did. Um, so I was

not a good flirt growing up. Uh, that was not a thing that I thought I knew how to do. It turns out I did sort of pick up some stuff growing up because I grew up in the south and as a woman in the south of your primary mode of things that you need or want is never to ask that. It's to sort of be attractive and bat your eyelashes and sort of suggest that maybe you want a thing. Um, as, so that was what I was raised around, but I was also raised by Yankee parents who are really into that, kind of a confusing experience in some way. So, um, but it was also very, um, it was really challenging for me because, uh, you know, I was, I was all ready even as a young person, like kind of outside the box in terms of my own romantic and sexual interests and, uh, the sort of environment that I was in, just like, it was all very indirect and like suggestive, and then you would flirt and then

you might get something completely different.

Marcia B: So I didn't, I wasn't a good flirt in the sense of getting anything that I wanted or anybody that I wanted attention and like

disasters. So I wouldn't say I was good at it, but, um, I moved to New York City in 2000 at, yeah. Wow. 2000. And I remember going to--two things happened. One is I went on vacation about a year or two later to, um, south beach in Miami. And one of the things I noticed there was that all the men in the shops were flirting with me, but I was pretty sure they were all gay and a lot of them were from Europe. A lot of them were Italian specifically. And I was like, oh this is fascinating. Like they're all flirting with me but none of them want to sleep with me. And that was like a revelation at the time for me of like, oh you can flirt without trying to like make something sexual happen. So that was the thing that happened that was like, oh it's sort of about like a game where you, you juice each other up and you flatter each other and you make each other feel good. And like there's a little free song, but it's not like, okay, now something's

going to happen. It was sort of, that was a revelation. So that

was the first thing. And then the second thing that happened was I started dating somebody who was a compulsive flirt.

Marcia B: 05:06

He flirted with everybody. And, and it was so funny cause it would be like we'd get in a cab and, and some of it was just being like genuinely friendly. Like, hey, how's your day going? Oh, you know, just making chat chatter about whatever small talk even. And then small talk gets a bad rap. But the other thing that I noticed was that it was, he just kind of had this way of going around and making people sort of feel good and he was flirt with the ladies at the Bodega and he would flirt with the cocktail waitresses, but it was never like pushing an agenda. And so those two things have sort of clued me into, oh, the thing about flirting is that you are, yes, it is a little bit about raising the sexual energy that is about sort of, uh, kind of being suggestive being like there's, there, there's sort of a double entendre at play. There's like the normal bounds of conversation, but then there's this sort of subtext of just ever so slightly. And that's really key. The ever so slightly is really key ever so slightly outside the bounds of normal conversation. Like, oh, what's going to happen next? That creates that, that sensation of, oh I don't know. I don't quite know where we're at, but it doesn't feel scary and it doesn't feel like I'm being bulldozed and it doesn't feel like I'm being railroaded because it's, it's really close. It's just outside the edge of the,

Flick Morrison: 96:18 yeah, there's no, there's definitely that line between flirting and

hitting on somebody.

Marcia B: Ves. And they're not the same.

Flick Morrison: 06:26 They really aren't. Yeah.

Marcia B: 06:28 No

Flick Morrison: 06:29 No. I think, I think flirting, um, if, um, if, if you have plausible

deniability, then you're still flirting.

Marcia B: O6:40 Totally. So this is actually because I'm a nerd. I looked up the

dictionary definition and then I looked at the Wikipedia

definition

Flick Morrison: 06:48 Awesome, yes.

Kat Stark: 06:49 Woo!

Marcia B:	06:49	Before I teach I'm pretty much, that's the thing I do before I teach any workshop, I'm like, well what's, what, how are people commonly, like if we were to look it up, what will we all find? And, right. Cause it gives sort of a common starting point. And one thing that I noticed in the Wikipedia entry, which I don't have in front of me right now, is that it was, it really pointed to this sort of plausible deniability thing. It didn't say that phrase, but it talked about the suggestion that's just slightly outside the bounds of whatever the social norm is. And I think this starts to get at why people are bad at flirting,
Flick Morrison:	07:23	Right! Because, because they, they, they either go too far enough or enough,
Marcia B:	07:27	Right. They, they are either so worried about getting outside the bounds of the social norm that they don't go, they don't flirt at all or the way overshoot the mark.
Flick Morrison:	07:38	It's, it's actually funny how, um, like under correcting can sometimes be just as creepy as going too far.
Marcia B:	<u>07:47</u>	Yeah.
Flick Morrison:	<u>07:48</u>	Where someone where someone is, you know, is being friendly but not sort of signaling any like flirtatious interest, but they're just like kind of too present to, to for it to not be flirting, if, if that makes sense.
Marcia B:	<u>08:04</u>	Well that's sort of where there's an agenda, right?
Flick Morrison:	<u>08:05</u>	Yeah.
Marcia B:	<u>08:06</u>	What makes flirting creepy is when there's an agenda, there's an a, there's an expected outcome, and good flirting sort of allows for a lot of possibilities. It's, it's really playful. And it, it's like, it's the difference between somebody sort of coming over So a lot of Let me back up a little bit, a lot of people will say, well, the difference between welcome flirting and unwelcome flirting is whether or not I like the person, which there's some truth to that.
Kat Stark:	<u>08:33</u>	Yeah, that's fair.
Marcia B:	08:34	But that being said, there are a lot of people who have flirted with me, who I have not been interested in, because they didn't have an agenda and they were very comfortable with a variety of outcomes. It was still not creepy. It just wasn't. And so I think

that agenda that like I'm trying to make a thing happen and there's like an urgency or that like tension or the rigidity or that like hyper presence, but not actual flirting. Like that's not playful. It's not fluid and it sucks.

Flick Morrison: 09:07 Google result for defined flirting is actually pretty interesting.

Uh, defines uh, it defines to flirt as a... To behave as though attracted to or trying to attract someone but for amusement

rather than with serious intentions.

Marcia B: Yeah. So I saw that dictionary definition and I didn't like it. I

think it's only partially true.

Flick Morrison: 09:28 It really is only partially true. Right?

Marcia B: Yeah. But that was the dictionary definition I got when I looked

Which you know, if you're nerdy and you don't know how to do things like me. Then you go to Wikipedia. You start there figure it out. Um, but yeah, so yeah, there's that. But I do think there is an amusement thing there. There can be kind of, um, we're never going to see each other again. We're obviously not going to sleep together for whatever reason. Maybe we are not compatible sexual orientations. Maybe we are ships passing in the night, whatever. It can still be fun to flirt. It can still be fun to like judge somebody up or like give them a little juice, compliment their outfit or compliment you know, their smile or

something that they're doing, which is a key, uh, compliments, compliment things that people have control over. Not things

it up. But the Wikipedia entry is a lot more detailed. [laughing]

that they don't.

Flick Morrison: 10:22 Right.

Flick Morrison: 10:23 Sort of rule number one when I'm talking about compliments in

the context of flirting is, you know, compliment people on things that they, they had a say over. So like don't compliment their tits or their ass or their cock or their whatever. Unless you're much more intimate. [All laughing] At that point you're past flirting but within the context of flirting, you want to compliment them on something that shows that you noticed that they have good taste or that they have good style or they have fun 80's style or, interesting style or whatever. So yeah, compliment them on how they have, you know, their hair color, if it's dyed or compliment them on their makeup or their cute shoes or the thing they said or the joke they made or whatever.

Flick Morrison:	11:04	It's really interesting how, you know, you sort of described all these sort of flirting scenarios where there, there really isn't any sort of possibilities on the table. And it's amazing how many people are so much better at flirting when, um, when it is, when there, when there are no possibilities. When it's somebody that there's, there's definitely no interest or possibility or like you said, it's, you know, you're, you're at an airport bar and nothing's going to happen. You know, uh, there are, uh, most people when there are, when there are no stakes are, are far, far better at flirting.
Kat Stark:	<u>11:42</u>	Yeah. Yeah. I was just thinking that because like I, I described myself as a terrible flirt, but in those situations I can be kind of flirty because yeah, there's no, and that's, it's only if I'm at a situation like, you know, at a, at a club or a party or something where I am actually wanting to express my interest in someone that I just completely freeze up. But, you know, with the, the cashier at Safeway or something like that, it's a lot easier to just be kind of charming. And, and the little, you know, whatever. Um,
Flick Morrison:	<u>12:17</u>	Well, and you're, you're really good at flirting with, um, with friends of all genders who you're not interested.
Kat Stark:	12:24	Oh yeah. Yeah. That's, that's super easy. But if I am interested in them, I just sort of get white noise. [All laughing]
Marcia B:	12:34	You make a really good point. Right? So there's some people who don't flirt unless they think that something can happen. And if there's other people who can't flirt unless they know nothing is going to happen. And both of those are, um, I mean, and I think in the latter case, that's where we do get into that dictionary definition where you're just doing it for amusement, you're doing it for, you know, just a way to make somebody feel good, to make yourself feel good. Kind of pass the time. Like it's playful, but it's not quote unquote going somewhere. Um, but then there's other people who only flirt if they have an agenda, which is, that's where you get the creepiness and then there's that sort of in between a blank. I don't know if it's going to go somewhere and I kind of want it to, but I don't want to be the creepy guy and then I don't, you know like you get caught up in your head and that's where our flirting styles might change.
Marcia B:	<u>13:21</u>	So where it might be fine, it might be really easy to be charming at Safeway. Charm may not be your Kind of what you said at

the very beginning of the podcast. Like you just start getting awkward then I'm flirting with you but that this is where you know, it's helpful to think of it as like you're throwing a ball and

yeah, if you're into somebody you want them to catch the ball but if the ball just falls on the ground next to them, it's not necessarily a bad thing. They may pick it up and notice it later and throw it back to you later and then you don't notice it, cause a lot of us are also really bad at noticing when people are flirting with us

Kat Stark: 13:55 I don't know what you mean by this.

Marcia B: 14:04 Just be available for whatever reason. Maybe they're having a

bad self esteem day. Maybe they're in a relationship where they feel like they can't flirt because of their whatever their agreements or unconscious choices, um, you know, whatever. So there's a lot, a lot of times there are people who won't flirt back with us even if we want them to. And I can give an example of this. Um, I was flirting with this guy for about a year. I'd say every time I saw him I would try to have a conversation with him. I would try to like, you know, I would throw the ball basically, I'd be like, oh, and that was not super attached to something happening with him, but I definitely was interested and I was definitely trying to make my interest known. And then I was teaching this class, the flirting class that I teach, and he was in the room. And then we started talking about gender and how gender affects flirting and socialization and stuff like that. And he raises his hand and says, women never flirt with me. And it was everything I could do to not Call him out in front of 40 people. Please, I've been flirting with you for a year so get over yourself. Right. But like he just wasn't picking up... I was throwing the ball, but he wasn't picking up the ball. He just, and when we talk later, something that it was that he had a story that women don't flirt with him. He never noticed when women were flirting with him because his story about himself was that women don't flirt with him. Yeah. So if I was a woman, obviously I was not flirting with him no matter what I was doing.

Flick Morrison:

Yeah. Yeah. And you know, and often it's, it's subtle and people, um, people will walk me...Oh, they're there. They're just being friendly, or they're just having fun. And, and it can both be true.

They can both be, you know, harmless and mean, nothing. But

it's still flirting.

Marcia B: 15:40 Right. And the thing about flirting is that it's both, if someone's

genuinely flirting with you and letting you know that they're interested, they're also doing plausible deniability.

Flick Morrison: 15:50 Mmm Hmm.

Marcia B:	<u>15:51</u>	That's the tricky thing about flirting is that, you know, it's really
		easy to be like, oh, they're just being friendly. No, they're being
		friendly. And they're letting their interest to be known because
		they don't want to be embarrassed if you're not into that.

Yeah. And I think that's where like as a really anxious person, I am terrible at reading, flirting unless it's incredibly obvious because my anxiety over like what if I think they're flirting and they're actually not. And the, and the, you know, the embarrassment and the shame that I would feel if, if I was misreading it. And so I find that, and again, like with, with my anxiety, I find that I can't sort of be subtle when I'm flirting with other people. Um, like just, I just need to be super direct so they know what I'm saying and that there's no confusion. Um, so yeah, that, that piece of it can really get in the way.

There's a lot of different styles.... Totally. I think that's a good point. But there's also a lot of different styles of flirting and people may or may not pick up on your style as well. So you talked about being really direct and the way that that particular situation got resolved was later on that day, I saw how he had a piece of glitter on his cheek? And I was like, Oh, you've got glitter on your cheek. Do you mind if I get it off? And he said, no. And I went and got it off. And I said, by the way, that was me flirting with you. And then I turned and walked away. [All laugh]

Flick Morrison: <u>17:13</u> Nice

17:19

16:04

16:46

Kat Stark:

Marcia B:

Marcia B:

Marcia B: 17:13 The other piece of flirting is that you want to give people a choice. You don't want to railroad them. So you like kind of throw them a ball and, and see if they catch it.

And sometimes they do and sometimes they don't. And if they don't catch it, that doesn't necessarily mean to not try again. Because you know, again, obliviousness right? A lot of us have it. Um, but you know, hitting someone up with a clue-by-four, uh, making it very clear you're flirting with them. If you already know that they're not good at picking it up or letting other people know, hey, by the way, if you want to flirt with me, clue-by-four works really well. Um, you know that making it explicit. Then also in the making it explicit, giving people a choice, like still making it sort of an opt in. Then that's where you start to get into consent. As soon as things start getting, getting more explicit and start veering into the quote unquote hitting on territory, you really, really, really want to, like the choice in flirting is with the plausible deniability. As soon as you don't have plausible deniability, now we're into negotiation, now

we're into like explicit consent and then verbalizing things on that sort of thing. So, but you gotta like make it so that people really do feel like they have a choice, whether it's in the nonverbal, not explicit yet. No, we are just having a playful, fun time. We're not trying to escalate. That's like if that's their response and that you got to like, that's where the consent piece comes in. It's like, it's basically about listening. Right?

to stay there. I'm going to like move in and then I'm going to

Kat Stark:	<u>18:38</u>	Yeah. And, and Flick actually had a really great technique for when he was bringing sort of flirting into it or almost asking if he could flirt with people.
Flick Morrison:	18:50	Yeah. I, I, um, you know, especially if if this, if it's this thing where it's, it's really ambiguous. You don't really know whether, you know, they're, they're interested in sort of, you know, having a different kind of relationship. Uh, I would often say, you know, sort of a pitch something with the caveat that was like, you know, uh, can I ask you something? You know, really awkward and you know, if you want, you can just shout, Smoke Bomb and it'll disappear and we'll, and we'll, we'll never have to talk about it again.
Marcia B:	<u>19:24</u>	Yeah. So that's like defusing the, that sort of diffusing the directness, right? Yeah, exactly. There's other ways to flirt too. You know, some people are very, very physical and so it might be just like, and this gets really confusing, I think also with women flirting with women
Kat Stark:	<u>19:43</u>	[Laughing]
Marcia B:	<u>19:44</u>	*unintelligible*. I don't know. She complimented everything about me, but I don't know if she was just being nice.
Kat Stark:	19:48	Oh yeah that's, that's where it. That's where I find it even harder to read because yeah, we tend to be, you know, much more affectionate with one another and much more complimentary and, and even to the point of like if it's someone you know fairly well, like Oh wow, your ass looks amazing in that skirt or something like that. That right doesn't necessarily mean anything.
Marcia B:	20:13	Well yeah, but so like that's where like three main things like okay, I'm actually going to be a little bit extra, physically close. Not necessarily crowding you but slightly closer than normally would be our default if we were just friends. But I'm not going

move out again, giving a choice. Yeah. So a lot of it is that like I'm not going to come in and just crowd you and hover. Yeah.

Flick Morrison: 20:37 You don't wanna trap or corner somebody,

Marcia B: You don't want to be too, yeah. But if you're like, I'm going to

kind of move in and like be close and then move out and then not be far away, just sort of be in the normal range again and then like maybe dart in and then dart out again. And then after maybe two times of doing that, seeing if they start moving towards you. So like body language and non verbally was, you know, a thing that that you can do is sort of the, the 90% thing, like you go 90% of the way and then let them meet you that last 10% of the way, whether that's like physical space or like physical contact of like, oh like you, you put your hand right next to their hand or you like lean up like your shoulder, maybe shoulder to shoulder where it's not like, oh, can I touch your shoulder cause you're not physically reaching out to touch it, which might be a little bit more crowding, like feel a little creepier. Um, or like instead of, um, you know, holding their hands, you like touch their hand and then you move your hand away. And then, but then you do it a second time. So they know it wasn't an accident first time.

Marcia B: 21:36 [All laughing] And wait. Yeah. And then like, I don't know, are

they flirting with me, I don't know what to do. They still could go into that place. And, and thing about flirting is that awkwardness is inherent to it because it's about walking this, walking the normally accepted line with, that does it mean, this does it not mean this does it not mean like, so there's a, there's an inherent awkwardness to flirting. And I think what makes somebody a good flirt isn't their technique or their style or their pickup lines. It's their comfort with their own awkwardness and the comfort and willingness to sit with other people's awkwardness. Really. I think that's all it is. I kinda know that this is a bit awkward but I'm going to do it anyway. And then maybe, you know, but I'm not going to crowd them and I'm not gonna say it's like in tune with listening and then comfort with the awkwardness.

Kat Stark: Yeah. And, and that, you know, being really receptive and open to a no or a nonresponse.

Flick Morrison: 22:27 Right.

Marcia B: 22:27 Yes

Kat Stark:	22:28	Um, and I think that's what really adds to a lot of these things is, is, you know, being really ready, um, and accepting of like, I might not get anything from this. And that's cool. And the same, you know, with with Flick's Smokebomb technique, it's like, I'm, I'm really, I'm giving you an out and like this is, you know, absolute potential for no, and when I've done, you know, when I've tried to shift friendships and that sort of thing, you know, again, I tend to be much more direct, but I'm like, okay, if, if you say no to this, it's totally fine and it doesn't need to change anything. Um, but you know, I'm into you, I think you're really cute. Do you think you'd like to like make out and see if we have chemistry or something like, but I just like, I really make it very clear that, you know, the no is welcome and it, and I'm not gonna react in a way that it's like, okay, our friendship is over.
		[Flick laughing]
Flick Morrison:	23:23	Totally. Yeah. Like that there's, that, there's whatever the, whatever the, the current norm is, is an acceptable outcome. Yeah. Whether it's like, oh, we don't know each other and I'm making a move on you. Or you know, we do know each other really well and we have a great friendship, but we maybe there's a little more interest. You know, and I think that's getting into, that's starting in the smoke, the Smoke Bomb technique. I in some ways is even getting away from flirting and getting more into negotiation. It's like I'm going to make this explicit and, and take away some of the risk, some flavour of the discomfort, is still the discomfort of having to make a choice. But I'm going to take away the ambiguity. And I think this is why flirting can be such a, um, minefield for people is that it's inherently ambiguous what people need. [Agreement]
Kat Stark:	24:08	Yeah. And so I think maybe why I hate it so much and I tend to just, I tend to just go to the direct because like, it's like I don't like ambig ambiguity. Like I'm, I'm way too anxious for it.
Marcia B:	24:23	Some people are really like, and then what I, I often will ask in class like, who here is, you know, really bad at noticing people flirting with you? Who here is really bad at at flirting with people and then who here thinks it's adorable when someone is kind of unsure what to do and ended up flirting situa I like almost everybody's hands go up. Like they actually, a lot of people find that attractive anyway. I'm like, Ahhhh!
Flick Morrison:	24:49	Ohhh, when, so when someone is, is like kind of blushing and like, you know, having sort of having trouble sort of, you know, talking and that kind of thing. Like that's pretty adorable.

I was like those people are the sadists [all laughing]

Kat Stark:

<u>25:00</u>

Marcia B: 25:06 A lot of them were the same people. So you know... [Kat laughing]

Marcia B:

Marcia B:

Marcia B:

25:50

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27:24

Flick Morrison:

25:08

Well, you know what, like it's, it's, it's funny, like you, you, you sort of talk about that negotiation phase as distinct from flirting, but I think it's a part, it's the part of the flirting equation that is hardest for most people is yeah. Is, is knowing when it's okay to, you know, as a, as I think the kids are saying, no, shoot their shot. And, um, um, so, you know, so although it's not really flirting, it's, you know, that that transition phase, um, it's still,

it's still an important part of the whole puzzle.

Oh Absolutely. Absolutely. Because if you are just like, there's flirting just to flirt because it feels good and then there's flirting because you're actually interested in somebody and then that transition becomes a really important thing because sometimes, yeah, you can feel it for a really long time and be interested in someone and they don't know that you're trying to tell them that you want to do something. And that's where I do need to get more explicit. And, and the, and the giving people a choice thing in the explicit way, which I like, that Smoke Bomb, um, is really crucial. And that's, that's where the escalating comes in, and escalation is like... So I like to say with, with flirting, there's kind of, you're throwing a ball, right? And you don't know if they're going to catch it. And with flirting, it's sort of like, there's three acceptable outcomes.

A lot of people, there's only two outcomes, but there's actually three. One is it flops and then you go back to whatever you were doing before. The second is they show interest back and then you're into the escalation and that's where you get into like more explicit negotiation conversations about, oh, what are we going to do with this mutual interest? Whether that's like making out or holding hands or having sex or going on a date or whatever it is. But there's this third one, I think this is where it gets confusing, which is that sometimes you can just hang out in the flirting range for a really long time and there are relationships I've had that it's just a really flirtatious relationship and there've been times where I'm like, Oh, is it escalating? I'm not sure. And it's just like, no, it's not escalating. We're just hanging out in this flirting range.

And that's what the relationship is. It's a, it's just a very flirtatious, never gonna escalate. But we actually also don't have to go back to normal conversation. We can kind of keep this the new window and that's like the double entendre and it's just like, oh, that's, that's where we're hanging out. And sometimes it's just an interaction and sometimes it's like the entire

relationship. But I think there is a point of like, oh, am I getting something, getting something back and now I have to evaluate what is the thing I'm getting back. And then that's where making it clear. I'm a big advocate of that as well.

Flick Morrison:

Yeah. People, um, people can often end up, uh, sorta mutually stuck in that, in that flirting phase indefinitely where they're not really, um, you know, escalating successfully and they're, they're both very interested but um, can't bring themselves to risk rejection. So they're waiting for the other person to signal to signal unambiguous and trust and they're both waiting, you

think I think a lot of people have, have found themselves in that kind of situation. It's at one time or another.

know, and then eventually the interest kind of fizzles out because they never, they never went anywhere with it. And I

Marcia B: Yeah. Well, and that's where it can be useful to ask around if you, if you have mutual friends, like what's the story with this person? Like, do I need to be clear or is it, or are they like, yeah,

what's going on here?

Flick Morrison: Yeah. You can be a little bit grade nine. Like, you know, ask their

Marcia B:

29:02

friends if they're interested. Yeah.

Um, I and if you're in community, I mean I do a lot of dating in community and a lot of the classes I'm teaching, I'm teaching for people who are in community with one another. So like that becomes a thing of like asking around like, Hey, is this person like, okay, Like do they have room on their dance card? Like what's the story with them? And just kind of getting some context. Um, some people will just incorrigible flirts and they just like flirting and they're not actually indicating interest. And some people are doing their best they can to indicate interest, but they don't want to take that risk of rejection. And that's where I think we really all kind of moving into the asking for what you want.com phase of things, which where you can find me. How's that for a plug? Yeah, but that's where you're moving into the asking for what you want phase of an interaction of like, hey this is fun. Like you want to go on a date, do you want to hang out? Do you want and hang out is so vague too. Like I like to ask for an actual date what I can. Would you like to do something different?

Kat Stark: Yeah, I tend to be like, would you like to come over to my house and have sex with me?

Marcia B: 30:08 Because like just like just, and then if they say no, it's like cool.

Okay. And maybe they will have a counter offer of go for a hike

or maybe we just, you know, we'll never talk again. Or like does naming what's going on also, which is another approach to just sort of taking the ambiguity out of it. It's like, it seems like we're spending a lot of time flirting with each other. Just saying, see what they say. Yeah. Or even then that there's thinking even possibly commenting about like how much you enjoy flirting with them. Like, oh my gosh, you're so fun to flirt with. This is one of my favuorite things to do. [All laughing]

Flick Morrison:	<u>30:50</u>	Meaningful eye contact.
Marcia B:	<u>30:54</u>	Meaningful eye contact. I would like to do it more.
Flick Morrison:	<u>30:58</u>	Winks with both eyes
Marcia B:	30:58	Well the eye contact thing is actually a really good point too. So eye contact is highly culturally specific and also can vary a lot. Um, among, depending on like how your neurology is wired. So it's hard to say like, you know, you should make eye contact for x number of seconds and stare meaningfully into their eyes cause some people just take that as a challenge and run away. Um,
Kat Stark:	31:23	Oh yeah, it's not a challenge with me. It's a horror show,
Marcia B:	<u>31:26</u>	right? Like some eye contact, winking eyebrow. Waggles let's cheesy as they are. So much of flirting is cheesy or can be, um, it's like, Hey, I read, I remember my high school boyfriend, we were both like too smart for our own good. And we would do a lot of like Meta commentary, three in our flirting and even as like 15/16 year olds.
Marcia B:	<u>31:51</u>	And I had this really funny memory of we were watching a movie at my friend's house and it was one of the first few times we hung out and he just made this like huge show of like the stereotypical thing you saw in the movies of like the guy who yawns and he puts his arm around the girl so exaggeratedly so that I knew he knew what he was doing and that sort of just became this like very funny thing. And that stuck with me my whole life because I was like, oh that's a like sort of doing the stereotypical thing but in a like yes I'm doing the stereotypical thing, wink, wink, nudge, nudge. Like that is also kind of a funny way to flirt.
Flick Morrison:	<u>32:29</u>	Yeah. It's funny how you know being ironic about flirting is actually just flirting.

Marcia B:	32:33	It is just flirting. It's like, oh look at us. We think we are above all this [Flick Laughing] yet we are finding ourselves in this awkward moment together.
Flick Morrison:	<u>32:44</u>	So we've touched on,
Marcia B:	32:44	Are you enjoying this awkward moment of flirting with me as much as I am? [laughing]
Flick Morrison:	<u>32:50</u>	I am subtly expressing interest through my body language
Kat Stark:	32:54	I am. I actually do enjoy the, like the audio commentary of the flirting of like, you know, like wow that, that's a really great top, they say flirtatiously. [Flick & Marcia Laughing] Um, and actually articulating that kind of thing to to just kind of highlight the awkwardness and highlight the like yes, you are reading this correctly.
Flick Morrison:	33:19	Yeah. I can't remember all
Marcia B:	33:20	I'm giving you a prompt here.
Flick Morrison:	33:22	Yeah. I can't remember exactly what it was, but I remember, you know, um, making a joke that didn't land and uh, the, you know, the, the person who was, you know, just a little confused and I was, I was like, I was like, oh, I was just trying to be really smooth and flirtatious there.
Flick Morrison:	33:39	Right. It works really well. And then that, that, that's sort of like, ah, yes, I am flirting with you. Like, like the time I went up to that guy was like that by the way, that would be flirting, which gave the clue-by-four. Right. It takes, it is a way of easing the way for the other person. It's sort of like a, which is, uh, a generous and kind thing to do, especially if you suspect that they might be as awkward as you are.
Flick Morrison:	<u>34:06</u>	So I touched on it a few times, uh, indirectly, but, you know, are there actually differences gender wise in how people flirt?
Marcia B:	<u>34:16</u>	Well, there's, there are, there are differences in, a lot of them are socialized. Once you figure out really quickly, as soon as you take it out of any kind of heteronormative vibe, right? Like, even if you're still dealing with men and women, if it's not the stereotypical norm norm, all of a sudden the flirting styles change. You can see that at a femdom party, right? To start the flirting styles change, right? Like if, if there's female dominants and male submissives, it's not the same flirting you see in a bar.

Most, most singles bars, right? It's just, it's a different styles. So most of it is socialized and a lot of it is gender coded. So like, you know, women playing with their hair, you know, um, like cocking their heads and sort of leaning in. I wish I could show you visually, but um, there's, there are things that are, you know,

subcultural like I have to show my political wokeness like

whatever, whatever thing you're [Flick laughing]

Flick Morrison:	35:02	The side eyes,
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Marcia B:	<u>35:03</u>	The side eyes like yeah, having a straw in between your,
		between your lips and like making eye contact while you're
		drinking out of the straw whatever. The thing is. Like those are
		all kind of coded female or feminine or whatever word you
		want to use there. But they're not necessarily like they're, they
		work really well when you're doing gender fuck too. So it's, it's,
		um, there's nothing, I think there's hardwired particularly, but
		there is a lot of stuff that is coded around our sort of the
		ecosystem that we're in both, whether that's the larger culture
		of, you know, I had to show that I'm a, I'm a man, I have to
		show that I'm a good provider because our economic system
		privileges men over women and, and then they pour money
		than women and that's how it's supposed to be. So if I don't
		make more money than her, then like, yeah. So I have to wine
		and dine her, like kind of approach to flirting or if it's like a

Marcia B:

Yeah so we are, we're all sort of in our circumstance and like try to signal something with our flirting. So I always think it was like no matter what our gender is like we're all like the little, the birds that with their feathers sort of doing their display, trying to get the attention of the other birds that we think are cool. Um, they can watch youtube videos for that.

Flick Morrison: 36:24 I love those little birds of paradise with all their crazy little dances.

Kat Stark: 36:28 Yeah.

Marcia B: 36:29 Like what I watch people flirting. I usually have that, the birds of paradise to like, like running through my head.

Marcia B: 36:35 Oh yeah, that's really perfect.

Flick Morrison:

And I actually give my clients who feel like they're not good at flirting or are trying to learn how to be better flirts. I give them the assignment to go to a place where, um, people like to a club

or to a restaurant where a lot of people have first dates, that kind of thing. And just like watch the body language because the body language is also a thing that is again, is quite gendered in heteronormative contexts. But as soon as you get out of the heteronormative context that it changes considerably. Um, how men in a bathhouse pick each other up is very different than even at like a lesbian sex party. They're different things, but then, you know, it's also context dependent, right? So, um, yeah. Anyway, there's gendered things. They're socialized. Um, but then it depends on the circles you're moving in I guess is the upshot of that.

Kat Stark: 37:26

Yeah. And, and I know talking to a lot of, um, people who, um, women or femmes or assigned female at birth, talk about like trying to flirt with other people of the same gender or similar gender. Um, just that sort of where it often becomes difficult because we are used to doing the, the friendship flirting and then I'm attempting to have it, you know, be clear that it's more than that that we're interested in. And even when you're at like a, a swingers resort or a sex party, it's still sometimes hard to make that clear when you're not used to like when you're like, no, but I, I, I mean more than just that, you know, that swimsuit is great or whatever or, yeah. Um, and I, I know like so many people say how hard that is and, and you know, they just don't know how to, how to talk to women. Um, but, and I, and admit, that's usually where I get the white noise and the word pretty and I just lose all vocabulary. [Marcia laughing] Um, but uh, yeah, it, it seems to be an, especially people who've been like maybe in heteronormative relationships and are now exploring outside that it can be really challenging to figure out how to like make that like cross that line from friendly flirting to, like, no, like real actual flirting. Would you like to kiss me?

Marcia B: 39:01

Yeah. Well, I think this is, this is true regardless of the gender and who are the people involved. Like, as soon as you're out of the Hetero norm, like I talked to a lot of men who don't notice that they're being flirted with because they've never been socialized to think that someone might flirt with them because their job is to do the flirting and to face the rejection. And I think when I talk, and I certainly when I talk with a lot of people who are raised and socialized to be girls, the same thing is at play, whether they're flirting with, you know, people of similar gender or flirting with, you know, men or whatever, masculine folks or whatever. It's like, oh my value as a, as a woman or whatever, we're going to just sort of estimate genders here. But my value as a female coded person is in my attract, my ability to attract.

Flick Morrison: 39:52 Right? Kat Stark: 39:52 Yeah. Marcia B: 39:53 So the rejection is like, first of all, putting myself in the position to be rejected from an explicit overture is like, I am I desperate? Am I, am I so undesirable that I have to do this? Like that's what goes through a lot of folks' heads if they've been raised, you know in that sort of female coded way. And then on top of that, like if I get rejected, I don't have much practice with that. I don't know like what it means. And then meanwhile you've got, you know, men, people socialize to be men and whatever on Tinder, just swiping right on everybody that like they might remotely be interested in because they're like, it's a numbers game. I don't know man. Like I just have to face rejection over and over and over and over and over again. And the rejection becomes not so terrifying for some guys. Marcia B: Certainly not across the board for sure, but like it, it really just, I 40:38 think takes practice on both sides on being able to like notice when people are flirting with you and then also being able to make a move. Um, that's, that's more than like you, are you a cute, I'm just going to leave that there because you're probably straight, which was my style of flirting for a long time. And then I realize, oh, actually I've managed to surround myself with queer women. Maybe I should actually think they might be interested in me. Kat Stark: Yeah. 41:06 Flick Morrison: 41:06 Occasionally. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. But when we don't have a picture of ourselves as desirable, regardless of our gender, it flirting also becomes really hard. Flick Morrison: <u>41:17</u> No, and I, I, and I think that that is, that is where a lot of people become so um, so im-impervious to the flirting that is actually directed at them is because, you know, they, they don't, they don't see themselves as as attractive. So uh, they, they interpret all of those things is no people just being friendly and playful and couldn't possibly be flirting or expressing interest. Marcia B: <u>41:</u>44 There was a big turning point for me when I dated somebody who used to play this game with herself and she used, she used to just walk around like whenever she was sort of getting into a period of low self esteem or whatever, she'll play the everybody wants to do me game, which was basically she just walked

around and looked at people and be like that that person wants

to do me. That person wants to do me. That--. They're all just too shy to say anything and just like, it's such a dumb game but it's actually works. I recommend that you all try it for like a week and just see how it changes your reality just like that person wants to do. It's like I have so many options. We, we all have so many options cause everybody like in this, it gets you out of that scarcity mentality of like there's like three people maybe ever of all 7 billion want to fuck me. [Flick laughing]

Flick Morrison: 42:28 Yeah,

Marcia B: 42:29 no, everybody wants to do you just a question of time.

[laughing]

Flick Morrison: 42:33 Sounds like it'd be a fun thing to do with a friend. Like you

know, just say, you know, hey that person wants to do you and

just,

Marcia B: 42:39 Yeah. Yeah.

Kat Stark: Well I'm-- speaking of like something similar of the self esteem

boost of, um, I very recently decided I might try to be more of a Unicorn this year and so I posted to one of the local swinger groups about like, hey, it's been ages since I've been able to Unicorn for cute couple and posted like a thirst trap picture. Like, seriously, like within like within minutes for sure. Possibly within seconds I started getting all of these messages and it was just like, yeah, there's just really a wonderful, yeah, I'm super cute moment and yeah. And just like chatting with people and stuff, it just, yeah. Really buoyed my self esteem up in that way so I can totally see the walking around thinking, yeah, they want to do me, they want to do me. Because a lot of the time it is

actually really true.

Marcia B: Yeah. It's like I don't have time to invest in making that happen,

but it doesn't mean I don't want to do you. Yeah. I think there's $\,$

another, oh, go ahead.

Kat Stark: 43:48 Oh No, I was going to say, one of the lines that I did I come up

with, with come up against as someone socialized female is that I--I sometimes fear flirting back because of that whole like what I might owe in that situation. Yes. Um, and that is something, and I think that's part of why I am so, you know, dim about, you know, being receptive to flirting is because it's like, no, I just, I can't read any of this is flirting and I can't react as if any of this is flirting because I don't want to give them the wrong idea and lead them on and then

Marcia B: 44:26 What if I lead them on and then if anything happens, it's my fault.

Kat Stark: 44:28 Yes

Marcia B: Yes, totally real fear. So this is the thing, when I'm working with

my students in the good girl recovery program, one of the things I talk about a lot is the reason we've got to get really good at boundaries is because without our ability to say no, our yes is meaningless. And without the ability to say no, we become doormats. And so, and this is true in and out of the flirting realm, um, being able to very clearly and powerfully say no and like change the tone when needed and be willing to be a bitch in someone's eyes. Um, but also, you know, using the, sort of, the good girl tactics and appeasement if the situation seems dangerous because a lot of the reasons that we have these things, you know, sort of trained into us is that they are survival

techniques

Kat Stark: 45:16 Yeah for sure.

Marcia B: 45:17 Um, in sort of like, okay, like, so some, some piece of the flirting

equation is like, am I in a safe environment? So if I'm flirting in the Poly community, if I'm at a play party and it's the poly community and I know a lot of people there and there's generally a value around consent and things like that, that still doesn't mean nothing, quote unquote bad will happen. But it's, it's a much say safer environment than a bar on a Friday night. It's like a red bar on a Friday night where like no one is accountable to anyone. And, you know, if I flirt back and then, especially if it's with a man, um, I don't know if he is one of the 90 good, 90% of good guys or the 10% of guys will take me in the alley and slit my throat for not getting his way.

Marcia B: Like I just don't know that. Yeah. And so, you know, there is a

resistance I think on the part of people who come across as female in the world to just be like, I'm just not gonna engage in this at all because it's too dangerous. And so a big piece of that for me has been about finding places where it's safe to flirt [inaudible] and then being able to like practice my boundaries in those kinds of safe containers, which often is, again, not perfectly safe, but safer than the bar. Um, you know, in communities where there's a value around consent and like people can talk about stuff or with people that my friends who vouched for, but only if my friends have good taste.

Kat Stark: Yeah. Uh, um, and I, and I think getting comfortable with the, giving ourselves permission to change our minds is also a thing

because that is something that's been fairly enlightening for me is like this idea that you can be kind of into something and then change your mind. And so by, you know, by being a bit receptive to flirting, um, and then backing off to get away from that, oh, you're such a tease and you led me on, you know, that kind of, um, story that we, that we get that that's kind of the worst thing you could ever possibly do to someone. But be like, no, I have permission to change my mind. And so just getting, like, teaching ourselves to be comfortable with that, um, can be a way to try to find that ability to.

Marcia B: 47:34

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. The changing your mind is such a crucial, crucial part of it. And when you're changing your mind, what's happening is you're responding to the present and a lot of his act like if we say yes to something or even if we say no to something, we're like signing an internal contract that we will go until the thing is done, were done is usually determined by the other person, not ourselves or external circumstances. Yeah. Um, the one would hope if a fire broke out or earthquake happened, like that would be a sign that maybe whatever was happening, but um, and it's also not just changing your mind. It's also like I am a yes to this point and that point doesn't have to be penis is inside of Vaginas till one person has an orgasm and falls asleep.

Marcia B: 48:22

Like, and I think one of the things that's really for me that's been really awesome about being in the both the poly world, non-monogamy, whatever you want to call it, sort of open, consensual non-monogamy world and the kink world is that there's so much more um, acknowledgement of the gradients in between. And certainly cuddle party, which I'm the co-founder of, cuddle party. And this is a thing we talk about a lot in a nonsexual way. Like there are so many lovely pit stops that are perfectly acceptable destinations that for whatever we're doing for whatever we're playing with. And so like if I have it in me where I'm clear how far I'm willing to go, I'm clear what my boundaries are, we're going to go that far unless the other person's boundaries are, you know, sooner. Yeah. That's how far I'm going. And like I'm not leading you on.

Marcia B: <u>49:10</u>

I never implied anything beyond that because I had that clarity. And I think when we have our own clarity, like for example, um, I'm very clear about what my safer sex boundaries are at play parties. Like I just have a standard for myself and what that standard is not relevant to this conversation, but I'm clear what it is. And there's might be the same and yours might be different, but if you're clear what yours is, then I'm flirting with you within the realm of what I'm willing, where I'm willing to

play and, and when we defer our boundaries to what the other person wants, that's when we get into deep weeds. Yeah. Yeah. And it's fine. It's fine to change your mind on your boundaries too. That's acceptable as well obviously. But, um, not knowing at all what your boundaries are and then going, I'm just going to hope that they figure it out for me.

Marcia B: 50:00

Like flirting is really dangerous if that's your relationship to boundary and feeling entitled to have boundaries is something that is something a lot of us actually have to learn. A lot of people have to learn that because a lot of us didn't get that growing up. Like we either didn't get it, um, from our families on basic stuff or maybe we did get it on nonsexual stuff, but then we didn't get it from our early sexual partners and no one taught us that and we didn't internalize it. And we have to internalize it. On a somatic level. So like I think a lot of why flirting can be uncomfortable is that a lot of these things are ambiguous, but you don't have to make it clear necessarily with the person you're flirting with. A view of clarity in yourself about this is what I'm up for, this is what I'm not, that can also resolve a lot of anxiety.

Flick Morrison: 50:43

It's true, right. If, if you, if you're comfortable, um, you know, uh, giving an a clear, unambiguous but compassionate, know that it can make flirting a lot easier because you know that if you decide that that's as far as you want to go with the, you'll be able to, to pull it, that know when you need it. Yeah.

Marcia B: 51:03

Yeah. There's like, there's a lot of power and being like, no, I'm not up for that. Let's do this other thing. And like also making a counter offer. Uh Huh. Yep. So they're not continuing to push. Cause that's another thing. I think also, you know, speaking as somebody who was raised as a girl and more or less as a woman (gender is complicated). Um, you know, the idea that we can make counter offers is really foreign. I think to a lot of us. I was like, no, I'm not up for that, but I am up for this. Yeah. I like, it's a actually a mutual negotiation rather than a gatekeeping situation.

Flick Morrison: <u>51:36</u>

Um, it's, it's interesting because I feel like there are some parallels between, uh, between flirting and sex where, you know, a lot of the sorta classic view of sex is that, uh, sex is, um, his penis in vagina. And so everything else that you do sexually is really just a precursor to that leading up to that. Whereas a better view of sex is that all these things that we do are sex and that is just one of the many sex acts we can do. And similarly, if we can view flirting as a destination and a continuum that we

can, we can enjoy rather than just just a, a, you know, a step to getting to, um, to that, uh, proposition.

Marcia B: 52:22

Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. There's, there's, um, I always want to teach by consent classes. One of the things I'm really trying to get people to move away from is this idea of permission and more towards a model of agreement. And then there's an like consent is an agreement about how we're going to play it together. And that play piece is actually really important because all of the play, all of the places in flirting are play, all of the places in sex have an opportunity to be play. I mean, if you're trying to have, you know, conceive a baby, maybe it's not, but like there are circumstances under which sex is not play. But like a lot of the time that's what it can be. Um, centrally, exclusively or primarily, you know, like play is, is, uh, is a way of us interacting together. Not a thing you're getting from me.

Flick Morrison: 53:13 Yeah.

Marcia B: 53:13 And if the interaction I'm having is I'm trying to get something

from you. We're not playing.

Kat Stark: <u>53:18</u> Yeah.

Flick Morrison: 53:18 There's an agenda. And that goes right back to the beginning of

flirting, flirting or being creepy. You have an agenda and maybe are steamrolling them or maybe you're, you're hanging back, but we're not playing. And so it's not fun. And it's not juicing people up and then it's this, you're trying to lay your interest to be known, but there's no sort of recognition of the other person may have their own set of interests that you could collaborate and see what the Venn diagram overlap is and have a good time. Nope. You just view them as a source of getting whatever you want. And that's also like, I'm not going to put that exclusively on men, even though around sex is often like men are trying to get sex from women.

Marcia B: 53:58 That's the mod--, the 1950s model that we were sort of raised

with. One is, one is a provider and the other one is a consumer, right. It's, but it's true also in the inverse like, and I see it in same sex relationships, like someone's trying to get something from the other person and it's really hard to create a playful interaction and it's really hard to actually have an expansive model of, cause. I mean, you could still have a permission based model of consent, which is certainly better than nothing. I'm for that more than nothing. But, uh, but there's so much more

available when we stopped seeing the people that were flirting

with are the people that were having sex with as like means to an end like validate, I'm flirting with you so that I can be validated that I'm attractive or worthy person. Like good flirting sees the other person good flirting is like, oh, you in particular because of these reasons and that's why it feels so good whether or not we're trying to escalate it, that's where the good feelings from flirting is like, oh, that person sees me. Yeah. Something about me that was how that matches how I see myself.

Kat Stark:	<u>55:07</u>	Yeah. And, and being seen like out in the world and, or you know, at events or you know, even from your, your partners. Like it just, it's so fulfilling and it just really helps you be like, Oh yes. Like I am a person. [Laughing]
Marcia B:	<u>55:26</u>	Yeah. I'm a person. I'm a person that other people sees and thinks there's something cool or valuable about me. And so that Nice. Yeah. If that's how your flirting interactions are leaving people. You're doing great.
Kat Stark:	<u>55:40</u>	Awesome. Well that's probably sounds like a pretty great place to wrap it up. Um, why don't you tell us a bit more about where everybody can find you on the internets and that sort of thing.
Marcia B:	<u>55:52</u>	Yes, I am moving everything gradually under everything except for cuddle party I should say. I'm moving under asking for what you want.com. Um, but if you want to find out about the good girl recovery program, you can go to good girl, recovery.com and then cuddle party is cuddle party.com. So asking for what you want.com is the main thing. And you can find out about my coaching and my workshops and travel and there's a bunch of blog posts and all kinds of stuff over there.
Kat Stark:	<u>56:20</u>	Uh, and your Twitter?
Marcia B:	<u>56:22</u>	All my social media, Twitter, Facebook, uh, Instagram. Fetlife although I'm not very active on fetlife is Ask Marcia BM A R C I A, AskMarciaB
Flick Morrison:	<u>56:35</u>	Well, thank you so much for joining us.
Kat Stark:	<u>56:37</u>	Yeah, this has been a lot of fun.
Flick Morrison:	<u>56:38</u>	Yeah, this is great. Thanks for asking me to be on here, you guys.
Flick Morrison:	<u>56:42</u>	It's our pleasure.

Kat Stark: <u>56:42</u> Yeah.

Kat Stark: 56:44 [Closing credits music] Thank you for joining us. The audio book

version of my book, yelling and PhDs, the West Coast

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Dylan Thomas: 57:44 [Closing Spot] Oh, hello. I didn't see you there. I'm Dylan

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